

Xander Bogaerts's game gains admirers

Rookie's seasoned approach impresses

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JIM DAVIS/GLOBE STAFF

Xander Bogaerts, who was 2 for 4, follows through on his single in the seventh inning.

ST. LOUIS — Some of the magic was bound to rub off. Xander Bogaerts spent the last three games at Busch Stadium with his locker next to David Ortiz in the Red Sox clubhouse, and no one these days is hotter than Big Papi.

But Bogaerts came close Monday night. The slick-fielding infielder, who has been shuttling between third base and shortstop as the Sox have inched closer to a third world title in 10 years, went a more-than-respectable 2 for 4 in Boston's impressive 3-1 win over the Cardinals.

The Sox now have a 3-2 lead in the best-of-seven Series and Bogaerts, absorbing offense almost as if by osmosis from his stall next to Ortiz's, is hitting .294 in the Series and .348 in the postseason.

“Yeah, definitely some hits also, I probably robbed some from him,” a smiling Bogaerts said, asked if the close proximity to Ortiz could have brought him some magic. “So, you know, he doesn’t need [the hits] . . . he has enough for himself.”

Bogaerts, who only turned 21 years old on Oct. 1, stroked both his singles off Cardinals starter and 19-game winner Adam Wainwright. After striking out in the second inning — one of Wainwright’s six K’s in the first two frames — Bogaerts knocked a leadoff single up the middle in the fifth and delivered a near-identical single with one out in the seventh.

Two hits, delivered on short swings, both times the ball lasering toward second base and unable to be handled middle infielders Matt Carpenter and Pete Kozma.

“Wainwright’s cutter was working pretty much,” said Bogaerts, who hit .250 in his 44 regular-season at-bats. “So, I did a little adjustment and I got the barrel on the ball.”

In the seventh inning of a game tied, 1-1, Bogaerts was the potential go-ahead run. Stephen Drew followed with a walk and then David Ross ripped a ground-rule double to left that brought Bogaerts around to make it 2-1.

Ross, with ample gray in his beard, in a short time has become a big admirer of the young kid in the clubhouse who looks like he should be a host on a Saturday morning kids show.

“Xander Bogaerts is maybe one of the best young players I’ve seen,” said Ross. “The professional at-bats he’s thrown on this stage, it boggles my mind.

“And what I would be doing as a 21-year-old in the World Series . . . I can’t even, I would be in awe. That guy is having great at-bats. Adam Wainwright is one of the best pitchers in baseball, and what a great at-bat.”

With the 2-1 lead across, Jon Lester followed with a rollout and Jacoby Ellsbury, struggling at the plate, delivered a pop single to center that brought in Drew to make it 3-1 — and almost 4-1, had Ross not been cut down at the plate.

“You know, more runs is always better,” said Bogaerts, asked if he felt the Sox had the win salted away when he came across with the tiebreaking run. “So a one-run lead, especially in the World Series, you can’t guarantee anything. We got one more on Ellsbury’s hit, so that pretty well set the game.”

The fairy-tale run continues. One minute, Bogaerts was in the minors, thinking maybe a strong showing in spring training 2014 would land him a job in Boston. Then came the July 30 trade of Jose Iglesias to the Tigers, with Jake Peavy coming from the White Sox, and soon Bogaerts was getting dropped off at Yawkey Way with a no-pressure shot at The Show.

Now, slightly more than three weeks after turning 21, he is one victory away from slipping on a World Series ring. The title could come as early as Wednesday night.

“Man, that is a good question, a tough one right now,” said the kid with the sparkling eyes and a glove to match, asked what he’s learned most since becoming a big leaguer. “Just be yourself and enjoy the moment. It’s not always you that’s going to be in the World Series, so enjoy it while you are here.”

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Correction: This story mistakenly referred to the Red Sox’ series lead as 3-1 in an earlier edition. The lead is 3-2.

Source : <http://www.bostonglobe.com/sports/2013/10/29/xander-bogaerts-game-gains-admirers/euEpujtQNpVp9da1OX2v4I/story.html>